

This brief is organised as follows:

1. Issues
2. Organisational Image
  - a) consistency of message
  - b) consistency of image
3. Contacts and lists (see also appendices)
4. Methods/costs/considerations
5. Work accomplished
6. Things to do/general recommendations
7. appendices

Special note should be made of the excellent library, and, more particularly, the librarian's ability to produce useful materials at short notice. This is one of IDAFSA's strongest resources, and the most consistently useful in media work.

## 1. Issue shaping

The following areas of concern were identified:

- a) detainees,
  - torture,
  - prison conditions,
  - need for legal help,
  - community disruption when
    - people, particularly leaders, are taken away,
  - need for medical attention
- b) support to families
  - may have lost wage earner
  - food
  - rent
  - school fees
  - transport costs
  - medical needs
  - low grade housing
  - psychological support and counselling
  - education
- c) Children in situation
  - emotional/developmental trauma
  - schooling
  - come home, no-one there
  - nutrition
  - long term effect
- d) South Africa
  - reform not solution, but abolish apartheid
  - general violence in society must be recognized, not
    - just detainees (once kids get out, still
    - surrounded by violence
  - education system unbalanced
- e) The issues of the front line states are recognized but
  - not a priority, except in that they are adversely
  - affected by SA efforts to undermine them in
  - defense of apartheid
- f) Canadian response
  - public support is growing
  - corporate sector mindful
  - govt should recognize ANC
  - more public and govt money needed for legal and
    - humanitarian aid
  - Canada should impose stronger sanctions, and work
  - through diplomatic channels

## 2. Organisational Image

IDAFSA has a clear definition of who it is, in the form of the three "objects".

### a) consistency of message

The pamphlet distributed up to this year refers to the organisation by at least four different references, including The Fund, IDAF, IDAFSA, and Defense and Aid.

IDAFSA (Canada) was the one used, on the media campaign. The organisation should consider using IDAFSA (Canada) all the time, and stick with whatever term it decides on.

All pamphlet and briefing papers, fundraising letters, in fact all materials used by the organisation, should use one consistent name, and the black and white "da" logo.

### b) consistency of image

All images distributed should be consistent with the message we were trying to get across, which is that there is a new strength rising within South Africa, which is the South African people.

The pamphlet should have a positive image of hope or strength on the cover, rather than a person in submission to the negative forces we are fighting.

The temptation to fund-raise on pity should be resisted.

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3. Contacts and lists (see also appendices)

The appendices include the following media lists:

1. Contacts known to be interested
2. Quickie list, of (mostly) national outlets in Ottawa
3. Local Ottawa media outlets
4. Daily newspapers across Canada
5. Radio stations across Canada
6. TV stations across Canada

All the lists are available in mailing label layout in the appendices. Lists 1, 2, & 3 include phone numbers. Avery 5351 labels can be used. They come with 33 labels per sheet, total of 3300 labels per \$39.00 box, available at Willsons.

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#### 4. Methods/costs/considerations

The following methods were used:

##### 1) Call around - 30

This method issimply to phone known journalists asking if they'd be interested in event, info, opinion. Good to feel out what response might be, and to identify which elements in a situation are interesting to journalists.

Phoning journalists to check their perceptions is always a good idea. When it's part of reaction to South African propaganda tours, for instance, it quickly supplies journalists with source of alternate information, and helps find out what's going on, and what media is likely to be focussed on.

It takes about half an hour to contact the important ones, find out what they think, answer their questions, and decide what to do in any situation.

##### 2. Quickie release - 30

This uses the list in the second appendix - the main wire services, networks, and radio outlets right in the downtown area. A release can be distributed to all these people in a one hour walk from the IDAFSA (Canada) office. All the outlets should be called before the release goes out.

The Quickie list also includes key close MPs.

Care should be taken to make sure the assignment desk in each outlet gets a copy of the release, not just the desk of the journalist we know there.

##### 3. Parliament Hill release

All journalists on Parliament Hill can be reached by leaving 100 copies of the release at room 350N on the Hill, and another 100 copies in room 607 at 150 Wellington. Main contacts should also be telephoned.

##### 4. Local release - 30

This is most easily achieved in advance of the event and by using Canada Post. Outlets and contacts should be phoned so they expect release.

Couriers can be used, of course, if time is short.

## 5. Canada Newswire release

Canada Newswire has a number of distribution lists. We used Ottawa local, Toronto local, Canada English, and Vancouver local. Costs are high compared with the mail, but the message can be delivered within minutes. Releases can be sent two or three times, with times specified.

Costs for a hundred-word message range from 35 dollars (for a hundred words to Ottawa-Hull outlets) to about 110 dollars (110 English outlets across Canada)

## 6. News conference - Room 130-S

This is where Lloyd Vogelmann met Dan Turner. It's a small room under the House of Commons, with a stand-up mike. Any MP can book it, and does not have to be there.

## 7. News Conference - Press Theatre

The MP or government official must be there. Simultaneous interpretation must be provided (350.00 if not covered by booker). Conferences should be announced by Press Gallery Staff, who must receive information in writing, from MP, govt official, or NGO. The announcements are done from room 607 in 150 Wellington.

## 8. One-on-One interviews

We lined up one-on-one interviews with a number of people, Oliver Tambo being the most in demand. They should be used to increase attention to person or event in outlets which have demonstrated understanding, and which reach large numbers of people.

One on one interviews help move the issue away from the knee jerk treatment of pack-journalism, and help build IDAFSA's currency and credibility with individual reporters.

## 9. Question in House

Occasionally we were able to put out information in conjunction with a question in the House of Commons, something which raises the issue in the day's media agenda. Of course, the MP and his/her caucus must agree the issue is important.

## 10. Photo opportunity

The giving of Ramashamola's photo to Clark was a "photo-op". Most of Tambo's interviews took place in scrums at photo ops. The attitude of the journalism pack prevails.

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Costs of materials can be calculated thusly:

PMT (to reproduce photos) 10.00  
copies .09 and less

direct costs: \$20.00

Time should be assigned:

On average:

preparation of release, 1 day  
(writing and visual)  
distribution, phoning, response 1 day

labour 2 days

When required, the above can be telescoped into three hours.

When appropriate, for instance in distributing an eight page news release, it can take up to three days to design the statement and visual.

In other words, at \$150.00 per day, a news release distributed to Parliament Hill and Ottawa media can cost from \$100.00 to \$600.00.

In extraordinary situations, such as Oliver Tambo's visit, media relations for an event can demand more, in order to match expectations. His visit cost about \$2,500.00. (Only half that amount, the direct costs, were billed for.)

5. Work accomplished

The idea was to use events and 'news hooks' to establish and begin building a relationship with the media. It is the long-term relationship with gatekeepers which is important, rather than any individual media success.

We had hoped to shape the campaign into a consistent strong statement throughout September, leading up to the Commonwealth convention in October. This objective was thwarted, principally because of the unclear status of Trevor Huddleston and Ted Scott. Without their participation in planning it seemed there could be no clear focus going into the fall.

Another theme we had tried to put forward, violence against children in South Africa, received virtually no response, despite more than a thousand approaches. More about this later.

The organisation wanted to continue giving support to what Joe Clark was trying to do, without becoming too closely aligned with his position. This (desirable-at-the-time) fence-sitting was probably a good idea, but, while good for the organisation, it didn't help get media to be riding with the current.

I would characterize this derailing of our original intentions as unavoidable and the right thing to do under the circumstances, but I would think that in the long term the organisation would want to resolve the problem of what hat Ted Scott will wear, and who will speak for the organisation at future international level events, along with overall organisational strategy considerations necessary if the media campaign is going to serve clear goals.

In a sense, Oliver Tambo's visit put IDAFSA at the forefront in the National Press's awareness of anti-apartheid organisations, but then once we were centre stage, we didn't know what we wanted to say.

We built momentum but then didn't know where to direct it.

However, the experience should prove valuable. We did identify contacts, methods, and skill levels. We put out a lot of information, building co-operation with many parties. We established ourselves as being in touch with what was happening, and as a good source of alternate information.

What we have done should put IDAFSA in an excellent position to use the media to serve its organisational objectives and strategy.



The work:

- 04 27 Lloyd Vogelmann's visit: News Conference, 130S, brought to Pauline Jewitt and Howard McCurdy, done in co-operation with CIDMAA - News release and Q in Parl, 130S conference
- 05 05 Mail-merge letter to media organisations asking for help, not great response.
- 05 07 white elections news release, phone around.
- 05 15 Employment programs researched, would have to supervise and supply office space, but would result in huge data base being entered, in only six months. (no time to explore further)
- 05 15 solicited NGO co-operation to distribute series of ads on Free the Children logo. Found that more MORE WORK NEEDS TO BE DONE on long term co-op between media people, so that they can respond when things come up at the speed it takes to take advantage of things that come up. CIDMAA's work in the area of improving long-term interagency media work SHOULD BE ACTIVELY ENCOURAGED, PERHAPS BY SENDING A LETTER OF SUPPORT.
- 05 30 PAC applications - sent in, more politicking needed, and education so that PAC Board members understand media relations work better.
- 06 14 Mandelas' wedding day, photo distribution to five outlets, CP photo wire to G&M. Might try sending it to MAGAZINES in advance of JUNE magazine deadlines.
- 06 16 Soweto day Press Theatre news conf with Scott, Copps, and Philander. Philander stole the show, representing the ANC. A good example of how we started becoming known by being associated with known organisations and figures, but how we were scooped by other organisations who play the media more successfully, or by our own representatives wearing hat from other organisatoin (like Ted Scott, or Tom Berger)
- 06 25 code of conduct News release
- 06 26 South African Freedom Day - Canada newswire release, sent across Canada, six pager to parliament hill.
- 07 18 Mandela's birthday - celebration of 1 million dollars from Canadian government News release, Parl Hill and Quickie.
- 08 07 Ramashamola/Women's day - News release, parl hill.
- 08 28 Tambo - several news releases, newswire, one on ones, news conference, photo-ops, much coverage. Most of the media work involved getting ANC to free Mr Tambo for one-on-one interviews, and keeping reportersd connected with possibility.
- 09 21 Ramashamola - Photo given to clark, with petition, gets into McLeans, but without IDAFSA name.
- 09 25 Childrens Detention and Torture- reporters notified of children's conference. NO RESPONSE

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09 30 Mahlatsi - successful counter information exercise to  
undermine South African EEmbassy media scam.

10 07 children return - small news conference introducing Canadians  
returned from Harare. LITTLE COVERAGE

10 16 Commonwealth Conference - Media carried out by Anne and Keith

11 08 Cry Freedom - local release, phone calls, parliamentary  
release. GOOD RESPONSE

12 17 Ramashamola - loses appeal - parliamentary releases.

Most of the above news events were covered fairly well by a  
variety of local and national media. IDAFSA was not named, except  
in a minority of stories, as it was often 'outshone' by the issues  
and people it was putting forward.

The one subject IDAFSA was most centrally involved in, detention and  
torture of children, was not well covered.

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## 6. Things to do/general recommendations

### Clippings Analysis

I would strongly recommend that a suitable third-party be contracted to provide an analysis of clippings from the TAMBO visit and the Commonwealth conference. These clippings should provide an excellent base-line for any approach to editorial boards across the country.

We have nearly all clippings from all daily newspapers in the country on both subjects.

I would strongly recommend asking Prof Peter Brook of Carleton University to provide such an analysis, taking a fresh look at the material after familiarizing himself with our experience.

To say there is a bias in the media is hardly a new assertion, and, in itself, hardly a damning statement. All humans are biased, and the rigours of journalism, especially daily journalism, do not encourage reflection, study, and thought. (Please see article "A Presence of Bias", from Content Magazine, attached.)

The difference between David Halton's tone when he is questioning Oliver Tambo, against his manner while passing on the misinformation of British Foreign Secretary Howe, is quite instructive. Mr. Halton is widely viewed as a fair, honest, and by many accounts, a good man. However his attitude in approaching and reporting on these two gentlemen is decidedly different, some would say racist.

Mr. Halton is by no means alone, and it is only useful to point at him in order to give a specific example of how apparent bias manifests itself on this issue. I'm sure Mr. Halton would be open to discussing this.

Another problem we faced is pack journalism on the hill. Groups like IDAFSA are seen as 'church basement', and are often bypassed in a world where the ANC's position is available by satellite. The efforts to bring a contextualization to an issue by Canadians who are interested is often seen by journalists as simply more self-interested opinion. As one journalist covering the first Reagan visit demo said when he was assigned ' "Another f\*\*kin' demo" '.

Some journalists seem to compete with doctors to see which can become more arrogant in sustaining the myth of 'scientific' or 'objective' professionalism. Objectivity, like wisdom, tends to vanish the more strongly it is claimed. In this experience, it has been editors, rather than reporters, who tend to make these claims.

Keith Spicer, of the Ottawa Citizen, was unable to understand how the following headline was racist.

AFRIKANERS AGAIN CIRCLE WAGONS TO WARD OFF THREAT OF BLACK RULE

Threat of Black Rule - what black rule? Why "threat".

Journalists tend to view South Africa as black versus white, rather than democracy versus racism. They do not seem to realize that the South African government has carefully cultivated this way of looking at things for years. They seem to consider themselves above the influence of South African Censorship, which is nonetheless effective, if only through the resulting absence of information.

Reporters seem to feel their editors are even less enlightened than they are. Many said how difficult it is to put forward even-handed reports because their bosses would not believe them fair. The deputy foreign editor for Canada's largest daily told me he had to be careful what he printed because he had a reporter in South Africa who might be kicked out.

Several reporters in Vancouver said they were not permitted by their editors to publish even-handed articles.

The Canadian Press reporter covering us out of Ottawa said it is impossible to tell the truth in journalism, if the truth is outside certain socially acceptable limits. In his words "Even if you catch the Prime Minister red-handed, and even if you have clear proof, you can't call him a f\*\*king liar on the wire."

I believe reporters, like other humans, deny death by avoiding the topic, and that the deathly aspects of South African government's policies cause reporters to shy away, in the same way they avoid covering the horror Terry Fox was trying to get us to face and deal with. Instead, the media concentrate on heroism, such as that portrayed in Cry Freedom. As long as we concentrate on Terry's (very real) heroism, we avoid dealing with the fact that our violence against the environment is killing people in the most horrible ways. We sanitize our involvement. Editors tend to do this for their readers.

I remember a TV producer who, a few months before the Eritrean drought story broke, told me, "People don't want to see pictures like that at suppertime." Reporters are looking for symbols of hope and life. This is an extremely big problem when trying to get proper coverage of a horrible situation.

As I will later recommend, I feel it is hopeless to fight against people's desire to see hope and strength. Still, I feel IDAFSA should continue to work to improve gatekeepers' awareness.

To that end I propose continuing three areas of approach.

1. Indigenous leaders (Journalists themselves)
2. Continued soft-sell to editorial boards, generalized approach.
3. Continued courting of recognized friends, personal approach.

The first process I see as flowing out of an analysis of journalism as it is practised, as shown in the clippings. A process involving indigenous leaders, such as Peter Brook, Peter Desbarais, and others more directly active in the field, should be encouraged by IDAFSA in co-operation with other concerned parties. The co-operation with other organisations is essential if the media are not to dismiss the content as "biased".

The second approach I see as a continued general approach to journalists, both national and regional, continuing to put forward a position which they will eventually recognize as valid, simply because it is.

The third has been practised by some staff and board members for years, and is the most reliable method of getting the message out. Unfortunately, I feel it tends to reach the converted and not address the two challenges of changing attitudes in gatekeepers and capturing public imagination.

This project, and what it indicates for future action, should be discussed in a workshop which would serve the following objectives;

1. A familiarization and analysis of actual media coverage
2. Familiarization with techniques used towards journalists
3. Identification of desired goals for change in gatekeepers
4. First steps in developing a strategy to achieve these changes

I feel the workshop will be a good way of instigating a discussion in the organisation focussing on media strategy, and on relating the media strategy to the organisation's overall strategy.

What to do until the Messiah Comes

While working to improve self-awareness, decision making, and coverage by the media, I feel the organisation must reach the public in a powerful and imaginative way, if it is to accomplish the goals of being known and liked at a national level.

I would AGAIN RECOMMEND STRONGLY to IDAFSA that powerful images of hope and strength be put forward, if the organisation really wants a national profile. Let the tragedy be seen against positive powerful images, or it will not be seen at all.

Chris Brown

# A presence of bias

*Whether deliberate or unwitting,  
the press is filled with distortion,  
prejudice, and half-truths*

by William O'Grady

**W**e live in a society which takes great pride in its libertarian traditions, including a free press. In fact, it is often suggested that without a free press, the 'informed electorate' on which the whole idea of democracy is based could not exist.

Although it is not my intention here to question the assumption that the press is essentially free from government censure, I do intend to show that the media are biased in ways which do considerable disservice to the 'informed electorate' which relies on them for information about the state of the world. My discussion of this matter will concentrate on the reporting of 'international stories,' particularly those involving disarmament and relations between the superpowers.

I take 'media bias' to be any slant or imbalance in news coverage or analysis which can create a distorted or inaccurate image of reality in the public's mind. Two points must be made about this type of inquiry.

First, it is necessary to recognize that it is sometimes genuinely difficult to determine on independent grounds the nature of the 'reality' against which a news story can be evaluated. This will not always be the case, of course, but it is necessary to recognize that in some matters there can be legitimate differences of opinion on what has really happened or what the true state of affairs is. In such cases, it would seem reasonable to expect balanced reporting of the various points of view and to identify any departure from this practice as a form of bias. In cases where a story deals with an objective event, of course, anything less than accurate and impartial reporting of the facts will constitute bias.

A second important point which must be made before proceeding is that bias can be unconscious and can sometimes result from factors over which individual reporters, editors, and news organizations have no control (e.g. unconscious personal prejudices or predispositions, inaccurate or inadequate information base, a failure to

comprehend some complex issue, lack of newsgathering resources in a particular part of the world, etc.).

It is therefore quite possible to identify cases of media bias without being committed to the view that the press is a propaganda organ for a particular group or that there is a conspiracy to provide the public with disinformation.

Needless to say, however, these considerations cannot in any way lessen the seriousness of media bias, if in fact it exists. Some 95 per cent of the population relies on the electronic and print media as its sole or principal source of information and it is therefore obvious that unbalanced or inaccurate reporting will have a significant impact on public opinion, regardless of whether there is an intent to mislead.

Moreover, it is also important to note that public opinion, once formed, is difficult to change. Attitudes and opinions are typically developed on the basis of first impressions (the so-called 'primacy effect') and then play a role in determining how subsequent information is evaluated, selected, and retained. This, in turn, ensures that past and current bias in media coverage will have far-reaching consequences. In fact, it is likely that the appearance of a truly unbiased media would occasion considerable scepticism in its readership, who would in all probability assume it to be 'biased' because of its non-compliance with the world view it had earlier helped create.

In examining the possibility of media bias in the reporting of international stories, I found it useful to explore two lines of inquiry — one relating to the selection of stories to be covered in the media and the second relating to possible errors and misrepresentations in the reporting of particular events.

Under this dichotomy, then, the first type of bias does not involve errors or impartiality in the coverage of a particular story as much as it does the (usually accurate) reporting of an unrepresentative set of stories. I will begin my case study of media bias by illustrating the discrepancy in the coverage of

human rights stories and exploring its likely consequences for the public's perception of the world's two superpowers.

**E**very day hundreds of thousands of events — natural disasters, accidents, scientific and cultural accomplishments, crimes, protests, acts of repression and regression — occur throughout the world. Of these, only a tiny fraction can actually receive coverage in the media and it is therefore important to ask whether the manner in which editors select the stories which they cover follows any type of pattern. It is well known, of course, that the Western media draw the vast majority of their stories from North America and Europe — a fact which reflects the distribution of newsgathering resources. This in turn creates an indisputable imbalance in the quality and quantity of the coverage given to news stories from different parts of the world; but there is an even more troubling side to all this. In particular, there is good reason to suspect the presence of considerable bias in the selection of news events to be covered even in the areas where newsgathering resources are deployed. Consider in this respect the coverage of two major human rights stories of the 1980s — the Kwangju incident in South Korea and the Solidarity movement in Poland.

The events in Poland hardly require summary (thanks to the extensive media coverage they received), but a brief outline of events in South Korea are in order. In May of 1980, there was a student uprising in Kwangju — a city of 800,000 in the southern part of Korea. Demonstrators were protesting against the expansion of martial law, the arrest of dissidents, the suppression of trade unionism, and related issues. The demonstrations were brutally repressed by the Korean army under the command of General Chun Do Hwan, who has since become the country's president. Hundreds were killed and hundreds more wounded as troops

ommitted atrocities against the protesters; many more were arrested, some of whom died while being 'interrogated'.

These events were reported in the Western media, of course, and the *Canadian News Index* (a reference guide to 30 major Canadian newspapers and magazines) notes 51 different stories for 1980 and 24 for 1981. (Naturally, not all these would have appeared in each newspaper and magazine surveyed by the CNI.) However generous this coverage may appear, it pales in comparison to the coverage of the Solidarity movement, whose suppression in December of 1981 was considerably less bloody than that of the Kwangju demonstrators. Thus the *Canadian News Index* records 580 stories relating to Solidarity and Poland in 1981 and 405 for 1982.

Even more disturbing and puzzling is the treatment which the Western media accorded to South Korea in the months following the Kwangju massacres. On Sept. 8, 1980 (a mere four months after the events in Kwangju), for instance, the *Calgary Herald* (CH) ran a short AP story on a training program for the wives of Korean businessmen, noting that the women were to 'play their part in the on-going campaign for building a

just society under the leadership of President Chun Do Hwan' (the same Chun whose suppression of the uprising four months earlier had earned him the nickname 'the Kwangju butcher' among his countrymen).

Recent coverage of the human rights situation in Korea has been equally puzzling. On May 4, 1984 the CH devoted half a sentence of its coverage of the Pope's Korean visit to the fact that the police had used tear gas to quell a demonstration 'by several hundred students at Seoul's Sungkyunkwan University.' (Television news reports placed the figure at 5,000, with supporting film footage.) By comparison, a similar event in Poland on the same day received 84 column centimeters of coverage, including a large picture. Moreover, media coverage of a number of other demonstrations which were suppressed by the Korean police was scanty or non-existent and ceased altogether with the Pope's departure. Yet in an almost full-page 'background' story on South Korea prepared by the Times-Post News Service and run by the CH on June 5, 1984, it was reported that since February of 1984 the government had 'abandoned a policy of student suppression and started allowing unfettered expression of opinion as long as the students stay on their campus' — an obvious distortion in light of the events that had taken place a mere month earlier during the Pope's visit.

**T**he preceding facts indicate quite clearly that far more coverage is being given to the suppression of democracy and human rights in a satellite state of the Soviet Union (Poland) than in a client state of the United States (the U.S. has 40,000 troops stationed in South Korea). In fact, coverage of the Korean human rights situation is so sporadic that the average reader is unlikely to even be aware of events there, let alone recognize the Western media's highly inconsistent and self-contradictory coverage of them.

It is important to note, of course, that these facts do not in themselves establish the existence of deliberate bias on the part of the news media. It is quite possible, for example, that concentrated media coverage of events in Poland was and is triggered by in part by that country's cultural ties to the West, the importance of development there for East-West relations, perceptions on the part of newsgathering organizations about the public's interests, and so on.

This may well be true, but it is essen-

tial to note the probable circularity here: the importance of events in Poland to East-West relations and their significance to the public are themselves almost surely the result, in part at least, of the way the media present these stories. Moreover, it could plausibly be argued that greater attention to the representation of democracy in countries like South Korea would be of great significance and interest to North American audiences, given the role that our closest ally plays in buttressing the regime there.

An intriguing feature of the Western media's coverage of events in Eastern Europe is that the newsgathering organizations seem so certain of their own fairness and impartiality that they do not hesitate to accuse their Soviet counterparts of biased and unbalanced coverage of North America. During a single week in September of 1984, for example, the CH ran two full-page stories from Los Angeles *Times* correspondent Robert Gillette, deploring censorship in the Soviet Union and criticizing the Soviet press for concentrating on unemployment and poverty in its coverage of the American domestic scene.

Somewhat ironically, the *Herald* ran a story on the facing page (Sept. 19, 1984) about the plight of Yelena Bon-

1986

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ner, wife of Andrei Sakharov — thereby exemplifying the Western media's practice of concentrating on human rights stories in their coverage of the Soviet domestic scene. The *Canadian News Index*, for example, records 31 stories about Soviet domestic matters in June of 1984; of these, 25 (81 per cent) deal with human rights violations. In comparison, the same issue of the CNI notes 17 stories on communist China, of which only one (six per cent) touches on human rights. There was no record of any human rights stories on Chile or South Korea in the month of June, although it is hard to believe that these countries could have been models of democracy for an entire month. For some reason, then, whatever human rights abuses occurred there were simply not deemed to be worth reporting in the Western media.

None of this is to suggest that there are not serious abuses of human rights in the Soviet Union or that these events should not be reported by the Western media. However, it must be noted that the practice of concentrating on these stories while ignoring equally harrowing events in other parts of the world (including our own 'sphere of influence') cannot help but create a situation in which the crimes of the Soviet Union are examined out of the world context, thereby creating the image of an 'evil empire' (to use Ronald Reagan's term) very close to the one on which the current conservative U.S. administration wishes to base its foreign policy.

In addition to bias in the selection of news stories, there are also many instances of extremely slanted and questionable coverage of specific international events. As an illustration of this, we need only consider stories relating to disarmament issues involving the two superpowers and their respective allies since reporting in this area is all too often characterized by striking lapses in objectivity, factual errors, and unbalanced coverage of competing points of view.

A prime example of this is Peter Newman's lengthy review of 1983 news events which appeared in the Jan. 2, 1984 issue of *Maclean's*, Canada's self-proclaimed 'newsmagazine.' A far-ranging essay on economic and political developments in Canada and the world, Newman's piece included a number of remarkable claims, none of which were supported by evidence or subjected to rebuttal elsewhere in the periodical. Especially interesting was Newman's contention that Canada has become 'the only democracy in world history to have voluntarily disarmed

itself' — an event to which Newman attributes both the failure of Pierre Trudeau's peace mission and the American decision not to give Canada advance notice of its invasion of Grenada.

At a later point Newman casually notes that during 1983 the Mediterranean was 'becoming a socialist lake,' with Yuri Andropov 'cast(ing) an uncertain shadow over the scene.' Precisely what Newman takes to be the basis for these claims is unclear. What should be clear, however, is that Newman's claims are not statements of fact, but rather personal opinions — although nowhere in *Maclean's* is this stated and no rebuttal or opposing view was presented. This is not to say that the perceptive reader with a long memory could not identify the flaws and falsehoods in Newman's presentation (e.g. Canada is spending billions on new weapons, not 'disarming'; the 'socialist lake' known as the Mediterranean is firmly under the control of the U.S. Navy; and so on). But for the uncritical reader who turns to *Maclean's* for information, Newman's story and others like it cannot help but create alarmist and pro-militaristic responses.

Another example of anti-disarmament bias is found in a story run by the *Herald* on Jan. 11, 1984, in which John

Walker (a Southam News correspondent) stated in a passing that the Soviets were likely to use the upcoming Stockholm disarmament conference to call for 'a number of non-verifiable measures' including 'a freeze on new nuclear weapons.' The West, on the other hand, was expected to be 'pressing for measures that deal with the real steps to war' (which Walker takes to be troop movements within Europe). Notice that Walker's story contains factually incorrect information (it is widely agreed that a nuclear freeze would be verifiable, given current technology) as well as a subjective evaluation of whose proposals deal with the 'real steps to war.'

Another common practice in the Western media involves the presentation of a legitimate, but controversial, opinion as if it were a simple statement of fact. A good example of this appears in the *Calgary Herald's* coverage of the debate over cruise missile testing in Alberta.

In a front-page article in the Jan. 18, 1984 edition, *Herald* reporter David Rooney uncritically reported that one of the 'reasons' for deploying cruise missiles was 'the Soviet Union's decision to install advanced SS-20 missiles in Europe as part of a drive to achieve

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military superiority.' In the same article, Rooney casually referred to the hysteria' displayed by opponents of the missile testing who were in attendance at a government-sponsored information meeting on the cruise testing program. Needless to say, both the Soviet Union's alleged 'drive to achieve military superiority' and the hysteria' of the anti-cruise protestors are matters of opinion, not fact — although they were not presented as such in this article.

Comparable practices were not infrequent in newswire stories on the cruise issue. A Reuters story published in the CH on Jan. 11, 1984, for example, claimed that NATO's deployment of 572 medium-range missiles in Europe (an event which led the U.S.S.R. to suspend disarmament talks with the U.S.) was 'to counter Soviet S-20 rockets targeted on Western Europe.' Here again, the question of whether the U.S. missiles 'counter' the Soviet weapons or whether the Soviet warheads were not already 'countered' by U.S. submarine-based nuclear missiles is not addressed. Rather, what would be treated as a controversial issue is presented as a simple fact and even an interpretation favorable to the current American and NATO position. An even more disturbing instance of this practice occurred in an AP story

published by the CH on Jan. 14, 1984. The story presented a substantial list of supposed Soviet abuses of various agreements, including the SALT I and II accords. The report, prepared by the American administration, called into question the Soviet Union's trustworthiness and, by extension, the viability of disarmament agreements with the Soviets in general.

What was not mentioned, however, was that the SALT II treaty which the U.S.S.R. had supposedly violated was never ratified by the American Senate and hence did not constitute a 'treaty' at all. Moreover, no mention was made of the fact that the U.S.S.R. has caught the U.S. in violation of the same accords, but chose to resolve the matter in the consultative committee established for that purpose rather than seeking to score points in the international media.

A similar example of this type of reporting occurred on the NBC Evening News on April 10, 1984. On that day, NBC ran a story about the American Pentagon's third annual report on Soviet military power — a rather alarmist document used by the military to support its budget requests. NBC summarized the report in an entirely uncritical manner, making no allowance for the possibility that such a document might be less than impartial. In contrast, ABC followed its summary of the Pentagon's study with a dissenting opinion from Admiral Carrol of the Institute for Defense Information, who called into question many of the report's claims and conclusions.

Another feature of the Western media's coverage of disarmament issues involves frequent attempts to place blame for failed negotiations and the current cold war on the shoulders of the Soviet Union. The CH, for example, published a 'background' article (Sept. 27, 1984) by Washington Post correspondent Robert Kaiser under the headline 'Gromyko Architect of Failed Foreign Policy.' In his report, Kaiser blames Gromyko for a variety of foreign policy failures, including 'a new cold war with the West.' A striking feature of Kaiser's analysis is that he somehow manages to refer to Ronald Reagan as 'outspokenly anti-Soviet' and the initiator of 'an expensive arms build-up' without ever considering the possibility that the American president, too, might bear some responsibility for the current cold war.

Two days later, the CH ran the front-page headline 'Gromyko Shows Aggressive Stance' over a story of the first meeting between Ronald Reagan and Andrei Gromyko — implying that

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